

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2016

Bennet Academy
Joseph Chella, Principal



Book Picks

■ *A Dragon's Guide to the Care and Feeding of Humans* (Laurence Yep and Joanne Ryder)

Miss Drake the dragon tells the story of her new pet human, a 10-year-old named Winnie who refuses to behave like a pet. But watch what happens when Winnie's drawings of magical creatures come to life and terrorize the town!



■ *Mesmerized: How Ben Franklin Solved a Mystery that Baffled All of France* (Mara Rockliff)

Bright illustrations, historical details, and a healthy dose of fun are packed into this nonfiction book. After Dr. Franz Mesmer claimed that waving an iron wand over sick people cured them, Benjamin Franklin used the scientific method to prove Mesmer a fraud.



■ *Zack Delacruz: Me and My Big Mouth* (Jeff Anderson)

Being a "nobody" keeps sixth-grader Zack Delacruz out of trouble. Then, he defends a classmate from a bully's attack and gets more attention than he can handle. Suddenly he's responsible for the school dance fund-raiser—can he pull it off?

■ *One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia* (Miranda Paul)

When plastic bags piled up along roadsides in Gambia, Isatou knew something needed to be done. This book tells how her campaign to recycle the bags by crocheting them into purses benefited both the environment and the community.



Read the instructions

Whether your youngster is doing a school assignment or building a model car, he needs to be able to follow written directions. Suggest these three steps for success.

1. Repeat and rephrase

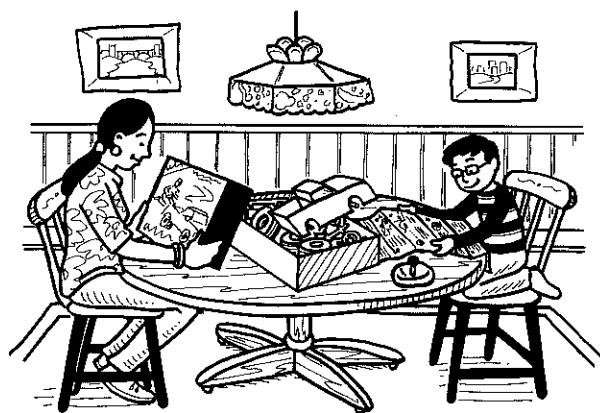
First, your child should read the instructions all the way through for an overview of what to do. Repeating them in his own words can help, too. If he reads, "Identify the point of view, and give your opinion on why the author chose it," he might say, "Name the narrator, and explain why he was the best one to tell the story."

2. Clear up confusion

Now, have your youngster do a quick self-check. Does he understand everything the instructions tell him to do? He can reread any confusing parts and look up words he doesn't know. If he's still stuck, he could ask someone for help.

3. Underline key words

Next, encourage him to underline each action. *Example:* "Insert tab A into slot B,



and glue it in place." When they're all marked, he could number the steps to ensure he doesn't skip one. Finally, have him check off each step as he completes it.

Name those directions!

To practice reading and understanding instructions, play this game: Read aloud instructions from objects around the house (cake mix, washing machine)—but don't tell your youngster what they're for. Can he identify the source? Then, let him find and read a set of instructions for you to guess. ■

Journey to a fictional setting

Neverland, Oz, Narnia...there are lots of fantastical fictional settings to explore! Let your child take you on an imaginary trip to one—the journey will boost her reading comprehension.

After she reads a book, have her describe the setting with lots of colorful details ("sparkly green castle") to help you imagine it. Get her recommendations on what to pack for your "trip." She'll need to consider the climate and the surroundings to advise you on clothing and supplies.

She might even suggest a souvenir to bring home. That will encourage her to think about the landmarks, scenery, or other interesting details she read about. Now, take her on a journey to the last place you visited in a book! ■



Infer with mysteries

Mysteries are great tools for practicing *inferring*, or combining details and personal knowledge to understand things the author doesn't say outright.

Write down clues. Take turns reading aloud from a book of short mysteries (ask a librarian for suggestions). You can each point out clues you see in the text. Have your child jot notes in a "detective notebook" to keep track. *Example:* "It is raining outside, but the stolen bicycle they found is dry."



the bike is dry, what could that mean?" (The bike has not been outside since it started raining.)

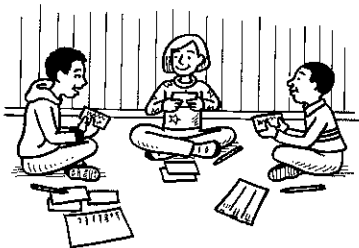
Solve the case. Encourage her to use what she has inferred from the clues to come up with an answer. "Since it was raining outside but the bike is dry, it must have been stolen before the rain started!" *Note:* If your youngster is stumped, she can go back and reread for missed clues. ■

Fun with Words

Bluff-ulary

Is a *carnivore* an animal who loves carnivals or one who eats meat? This bluffing game is a fun way for your child to use his imagination while learning new vocabulary.

Use a vocabulary list from school (or a list of fun words that you brainstorm), and write each word on an index card. The leader turns one word faceup and, on a separate index card, secretly writes its definition.



Next, each player (including the leader) writes a made-up definition on a separate index card. The trick is to write a definition that other players will think is real! The leader shuffles the cards, including the one with the correct definition, and reads them aloud. Vote for the one you think is real—and score a point if you're correct. You also score a point if someone chooses your fake definition.

Continue playing, word by word. Score the most points to win. ■

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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Parent 2 Parent

When writing is a struggle

My son Nick has dysgraphia, a learning disability that makes it difficult for him to express himself in writing. Doing reports is especially overwhelming because while he focuses on getting the words on paper, he forgets what he wanted to say.

Nick's teacher is working with us to make things easier. The most helpful strategy was her suggestion that Nick talk before he writes. First, he captures what he wants to say by dictating into a recorder. Then, he plays back the recording and writes or types his words. This allows him to write at a comfortable pace, and it's less stressful because Nick can pause or rewind the recording if he needs to.

Nick is proud of the improvements he is making, and I'm glad he has a way to tackle his writing assignments. ■



Q&A

Be creative with book reports

Q My daughter is excited because she can decide on her own format for her next book report, but she's not sure where to start. Any suggestions?

A It's great that she gets an opportunity to be creative. Encourage your daughter to consider different ideas to find one that's the best fit for her book.

For instance, she could make a "Who's who?" booklet by drawing portraits of

the characters and describing their roles in the story. Or she might mimic a favorite magazine's format. She can summarize the plot in a news article, write up an interview with the main character, and publish letters to the editor with reader opinions about the book.

Or perhaps she'd rather do a video book report. Suggest that she write a script and film herself delivering it, even interviewing a few "characters" using different voices. ■

